

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 05555 281215Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----113399 281217Z /53

O P 281050Z JUL 77  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7449  
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AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 5555

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, IS, US  
SUBJECT: ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

REF: A) TEL AVIV 5538 (NOTAL), B) TEL AVIV 5541

1. I HAD OPPORTUNITY AT A DINNER LAST NIGHT, JULY 27,  
TO PROBE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THAT PORTION OF PRIME  
MINISTER BEGIN'S STATEMENT YESTERDAY BEFORE THE KNESSET  
WHICH DEALT WITH FUTURE ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS POLICY  
(REF B). I TALKED WITH BOTH GENERAL SHARON AND  
FONMIN DIRECTOR GENERAL EVRON SEPARATELY ABOUT ITS  
IMPLICATIONS. SHARON IS OF COURSE CHAIRMAN OF CABINET  
COMMITTEE ON SETTLEMENTS, AND EVRON WAS PRESENT DURING  
YESTERDAY'S CABINET MEETING WHEN POLICY DECISION WAS  
TAKEN TO AUTHORIZE SHARON'S CABINET COMMITTEE "TO  
DECIDE ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SETTLEMENTS...  
WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS DECISION  
WILL BE AS VALID AS THE DECISION OF THE GOVERNMENT."  
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2. EVRON SAID THAT THIS LANGUAGE WAS CEREFULLY DESIGNED  
AT FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN'S SUGGESTION TO TRY TO MOVE  
THE SETTLEMENTS ISSUE INTO AS LOW A PROFILE AS POSSIBLE  
(PROBABLY A VAIN HOPE). THE LANGUAGE MEANS, ACCORDING  
TO EVRON, THAT SHARON'S COMMITTEE'S DECISIONS WILL BE  
TAKEN AWAY FROM THE LIMELIGHT OF FULL CABINET DISCUSSION,

BUT HE STRESSED THAT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL SHARON MOVE ON A SETTLEMENT DECISION WITHOUT BEGIN'S FULL KNOWLEDGE AND AGREEMENT. EVRON SAID THAT DAYAN BELIEVES THAT THIS PROCEDURE HAS THE BEST CHANCE FOR DEFERRING DECISION ON NEW SETTLEMENTS FOR AT LEAST A TIME.

3. I HAD QUITE A VIGOROUS SEPARATE DISCUSSION WITH SHARON, WHO, AS USUAL WHEN I SEE HIM AT A FUNCTION, BEGAN THE CONVERSATION BY SAYING IN THE MOST FRIENDLY BUT DIRECT MANNER POSSIBLE, "YOU KNOW YOU REALLY HAVE TO REALIZE THAT THIS GOVERNMENT WILL NEVER UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES WITHDRAW FROM THE WEST BANK." HE WAS OBVIOUSLY TAKEN ABACK BY THE SECRETARY'S REACTION TO HIS COMMITTEE'S DECISION TO GIVE LEGAL STATUS TO THE THREE SETTLEMENTS, ANNOUNCED YESTERDAY. SHARON INSISTED THAT THE DECISIONS WERE NECESSARY TO PROVIDE SCHOOL AND HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE FAMILIES IN THESE SETTLEMENTS WHO HAD BEEN PRESSING THE GOVERNMENT FOR WEEKS APPLYING INCREASING PRESSURE. THE DECISIONS HAD BEEN POSPONED WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY UNTIL AFTER BEGIN'S WASHINGTON TRIP. SHARON ARGUED THAT NEITHER HE NOR BEGIN HAD PERCEIVED THAT THE ANNOUNCEMENT, COMING AS IT DID, WOULD BE SO ADVERSELY RECEIVED. NONETHELESS, IT HAD BEEN NECESSARY. I UNDERScoreD WITH CONSIDERABLE EMPHASIS THE DELICACY OF THE DIPLOMATIC MOMENT, AND THE FACT THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WISHED US TO HELP ORGANIZE A GENEVA CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFERENCE IN A MOST DIFFICULT POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT WHERE ANY ACTIONS INVOLVING SETTLEMENTS POLICIES, WERE REGARDED AS HIGHLY PROVOCATIVE BY THE ARABS. I REMINDED HIM THAT ONE OF THE MAJOR ASSURANCES PRIME MINISTER BEGIN HAD GIVEN US IN WASHINGTON WAS THAT WE WOULD BE FACED WITH "NO SURPRISES." UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, I FELT IT WAS UNFORTUNATE INDEED THAT THIS DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN IN THE WAY HE DESCRIBED. SHARON SMILINGLY SAID THAT HE AGREED THERE SHOULD BE NO SURPRISES, AND THAT TO AVOID ANY IN THE FUTURE HE WANTED TO MAKE SURE I UNDERSTOOD THAT THERE WOULD BE FURTHER SETTLEMENTS ESTABLISHED IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. HE DID NOT SPECIFY WHEN OR WHERE, ALTHOUGH HE INVITED ME TO ACCOMPANY HIM IN LOOKING AT SOME OF THE HIGHLY DESIRABLE SETTLEMENT SITES ON THE WEST BANK. I POLITELY DECLINED.

4. COMMENT: PUTTING THESE TWO CONVERSATIONS TOGETHER, I CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT THERE IS NO AMBIGUITY ABOUT SHARON'S VIEW OF THE FUTURE, BUT PERHAPS A LITTLE AMBIGUITY ABOUT BEGIN'S THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT UNDERSTAND OUR POSITION

AND HOW VERY IMPORTANT THE PRESIDENT VIEWS IT AS A  
FACTOR IN THE EFFORT TO LAUNCH THE GENEVA CONFERENCE.  
BEGIN SEEMS TO HAVE POSITIONED HIMSELF TO DELAY ANY NEW  
SETTLEMENT DECISIONS FOR A WHILE, ASSUMING AS I  
CERTAINLY DO THAT HE CAN CONTROL SHARON. BUT WHETHER  
HE WILL DO SO OR NOT IS CLEARLY ANOTHER QUESTION.  
LEWIS

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## Message Attributes

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